

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

IN SUPPORT OF H. CON. RES. 177

HON. CIRO D. RODRIGUEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 24, 2002

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Dolores Huerta, the most prominent Chicana labor leader within the Latino community. Dolores Huerta is the co-founder and First Vice President Emeritus of the United Farm Workers Union of America (UFW), AFL-CIO. For decades she has dedicated her life to the struggle for justice and dignity for migrant farm workers. Honored with countless awards for her tireless commitment, she is a role model for the entire Hispanic community.

In the mid 1950's Dolores Huerta began her work empowering workers by joining the Community Service Organization (CSO), a Mexican American self help association founded in Los Angeles. Dolores understood early on that empowerment was the key to leveraging power within the Latino community. She registered voters, organized citizenship classes for immigrants, and pressed local governments for improvements in the poorest of barrio communities. Given her passion and determination the CSO sent her to lobby on behalf of these under served communities in Sacramento. It was in this capacity that Dolores began her historic work serving the needs of migrant workers.

Life for migrant farm workers is incredible harsh. They endure painful work conditions during the day—with the hot sun beating down on them as they spend long hours bent over picking strawberries, grapes, lettuce and other crops. The conditions did not improve in the evenings—they retired to run down shacks, if they were fortunate enough to have a home. Often their cars or the floor were their only retreat. The workers were paid nominal wages, \$.10 to \$.20 a basket, and often were subject to further deductions in pay for water they consumed in the hot sun. The majority of these workers were Mexican immigrants or Mexican Americans who were monolingual Spanish speakers and had no voice. Dolores would soon lend her voice, in fact shouts, for justice to their cause.

She joined the Agricultural Workers Association (AWA), a community interest group in northern California. Through her work with the AWA she met Cesar Chavez, at that time the director of the CSO in California and Arizona, soon to become her colleague in the organization which would improve the quality of life for migrant workers across the country the United Farm Workers Union (UFW). The UFW was founded in 1972 with a commitment to justice, heard through the shouts of "si se puede" or felt through the pounding rattle of their traditional unity claps, has won many significant struggles for Latino workers.

As a co-founder and second in command to Chavez, Dolores helped shape and guide the union and contributed to their significant successes. Her style has always been forceful

and uncompromising, yet she has been able to build successful coalitions of feminists, community workers, religious groups, Latino associations, student organizations, peace activists and countless others. Many of Dolores activities on behalf of the UFW have placed her in personal danger. She has been arrested more than 22 times for non-violent peaceful protest and in 1988 during a demonstration in San Francisco, she was severely injured by baton swinging police officers. She suffered two broken ribs and a ruptured spleen. However, this painful and life threatening experience did not stop her resolve. After recovering from her life-threatening injuries, Dolores resumed her work on behalf of farm workers in the 1990's and today at 72 years of age she continues to make appearances, lobby, and advocate on behalf of Latino workers. She has truly devoted her life to ensure that workers in this country are treated with dignity and justice.

TRIBUTE TO CHRISTOPHER REEVE

HON. STENY H. HOYER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 24, 2002

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, on the eve of Christopher Reeve's 50th birthday, I would like to recognize his unflinching courage, strength, and faith as he has worked to overcome paralysis. Not only has Christopher Reeve put a human face on spinal cord injury, but he has become a leading advocate for medical research, better care for people with spinal cord injury and for increased quality of life for the more than two million Americans living with paralysis.

After graduating from Cornell University in 1974 and studying at Julliard, Christopher Reeve made his Broadway debut opposite Katherine Hepburn in *A Matter of Gravity*. Best known for his star role in *Superman* and its many sequels, Christopher Reeve has dazzled the big screen and stage in numerous productions, such as *The Bostonians*, *Street Smart*, *Speechless*, *Noises Off*, *Above Suspicion*, *The Remains of the Day*, and most recently, *Rear Window*. He made his directorial debut with "In the Gloaming" in 1997, which received five Emmy nominations and published his autobiography, *Still Me* in 1998, which spent eleven weeks on the New York Times Bestseller List.

But beyond his experience within the entertainment arena, Christopher Reeve has achieved great success in a new and much more challenging role: a survivor of spinal cord injury who is working toward a medical miracle. Christopher Reeve has become a beacon of hope for all people with spinal cord injury and paralysis. The recent news reports about his medical progress has been an inspiration for not only those living with paralysis, but also for the medical research community. For the first time since his accident in 1995,

Christopher Reeve is able to wiggle his fingers and toes, experience sensation in his body, and tell the difference between hot and cold—something that the medical community did not believe was possible in someone so far removed from the initial time of his accident.

Christopher Reeve's recovery and recent scientific evidence show that there is hope for those living with paralysis. At research centers in the United States, Europe and Japan, new techniques of rigorous exercise has helped an estimated 500 persons with paraplegia and limited sensations in their lower bodies to walk for short distances, either unassisted or using walkers.

While the results of these new methods are quite miraculous, the limits of what physical exercise can do for patients remains grossly understudied. While each person and each injury is unique, and some people recover spontaneously, an estimated 200,000 Americans are living with spinal cord injuries that have not improved. Which therapy or combination of therapies will work for each persons is unknown. Today 2 million Americans are living with paralysis, including spinal cord injury, stroke, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, ALS and spina bifida. We need research to see how these new interventions work on the entire population of individuals living with paralysis.

Tomorrow, I will join my colleagues in introducing the Christopher Reeve Paralysis Act of 2002, which seeks to further advance the science needed to help those living with paralysis take that next step and at the same time build quality of life program in the state that will further advance full participation, independent living, self-sufficiency and equality of opportunity for individuals with paralysis and other physical disabilities.

Those living with paralysis face astronomical medical costs, and our best estimates tell us that only one-third of those individuals remain employed after paralysis. At least one-third of those living with paralysis have incomes of \$15,000 or less. And over the past 20 years, overall days spent in the hospital and rehabilitation centers for those living with paralysis have been cut in half.

Christopher Reeve's recent triumphs in overcoming paralysis prove how close we are to achieving major breakthroughs for people who have paralysis. The Christopher Reeve Paralysis Act of 2002 will ensure that the federal government does its part to help the more than two million Americans with paralysis who are still waiting for their own breakthroughs.

As John F. Kennedy once said, "The stories of past courage can define that ingredient—they can teach, they can offer hope, they can provide inspiration. But they cannot supply courage itself. For this each man must look into his own soul." Since Christopher Reeve was injured, his tireless efforts to walk again, coupled with his faith, passion and commitment to improve quality of life for others living with paralysis, make him an inspiration to us all. Happy Birthday, Chris.

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